

# Kent Adult Social Care Provider Bulletin



Friday 12 June 2020

## Introduction from Simon Mitchell – Senior Commissioner

What a time to join the Strategic Commissioning team! I am relatively new to Kent, but some of you will have seen me around in a slightly different guise during 2019. However I am extremely pleased now to be a permanent fixture of the team, and while during a pandemic and lockdown might not be the best time to start a new job, I am bowled over by how Providers (especially those in the Voluntary and Community sector) have adapted to continue their extremely valuable support of some of our most vulnerable and isolated residents.



The coronavirus pandemic has changed life for everyone. Many vulnerable and isolated residents have been hardest hit. Demand for support, information and services from across the voluntary sector has been enormous and at times overwhelming. All community organisations have had to quickly develop expertise in responding to government bulletins, changing health and safety policies and risk assessments, adapting services and staff and volunteer working practices to ensure everyone is kept safe. I am extremely impressed at how quickly this change has been achieved.

However, as we move to a period of further change, with the easing of lockdown measures, it is as important as ever for our community organisations to continue to support our most vulnerable and isolated residents to ensure their safety and wellbeing. I would like to express my heartfelt thanks for our Voluntary and Community Sector partners for their continued work and support of Kent residents.

## KICA Update



KENT INTEGRATED  
CARE ALLIANCE

CCG. We will also spend time helping you with any questions you have about the Infection Control Funding. We are running webinars every two weeks, covering

KiCA are holding their next member webinar on Thursday 18th June from 1.00pm - 2.15pm. We are delighted to have Knowledge Oral Healthcare who will be discussing 'methods to reduce COVID-19 transmission via the mouth', Lester Aldridge will be looking at the 'Regulatory Risks during Covid-19' and Cathy Finnis will be advising members about the new

issues important to the care sector during this challenging time. To join us, [contact Louise for details on how to join KiCA](#).

## Extension of Whole Care Home Testing

The Government has extended the Whole Care Home testing system. From 7 June 2020 all adult care homes i.e. learning disability, younger adults under 65 years old, physical disability, brain injury and mental health issues will be able to access whole care home testing for all residents and asymptomatic staff.

To access this testing, the care home should [register on the digital portal](#). Care homes will be prioritised according to local knowledge and the size of the home, as well as information on any outbreaks or infections.

To support care homes to carry out whole care home testing, there are webinars every morning on the whole home testing process. These help explain the process and what the home needs to do. Care Homes can [register to access the webinar](#).

The Government is exploring how other parts of the sector can access testing, including supported living, extra care and domiciliary care. Anyone with suspected coronavirus symptoms in these settings can [apply for a test](#).

There have also been questions about retesting in care homes and adult social care settings. We await advice from the Government, which has commissioned SAGE to consider this. We are aware that some homes have had difficulties with the current system for testing e.g. swabs not arriving with instructions, or couriers not arriving on time. Where homes are still having difficulties, please contact [allison.duggal@kent.gov.uk](mailto:allison.duggal@kent.gov.uk) and we will try to assist.

## National Carers Week



As this week marks National Carers Week, we want to send an especially big 'thank you' to all our care providers in Kent. Your organisations are delivering outstanding care in the most challenging circumstances and making a huge difference to vulnerable people and their carers. This newsletter is a testament to the work you do and the impact you have on the lives of Kent residents – thank you.

## Hospice in the Weald

The world looks very different now because of the impact of COVID-19. There is no one unaffected – including those patients, families and carers facing terminal illness. But at Hospice in the Weald, we are doing everything possible to be there for these patients and their loved ones during this difficult time.

The demand for our services has significantly increased; we are working with the NHS to reduce the burden on their services and have increased our in-patient capacity to 25. We know how important it is for everyone facing terminal illness to get the care they deserve. Ten of the beds at Cottage Hospice are being kept for our terminally ill patients that we will test to ensure they do not have COVID-19. This means that people can feel confident and reassured about continuing to receive compassionate in-patient care at the end of their life. A further fifteen beds in Pembury are now available for people with a terminal illness who have or are suspected to have COVID-19. We are caring for these patients because it is the right thing to do and having a dignified death is as important as ever.

In addition to in-patient care, almost 1,500 people with a terminal illness continue to be cared for in their own homes by our Hospice in the Home nurses. Counselling sessions remain important and are being delivered by telephone and webcam. Hospice staff and volunteers are contacting the patients and families who are currently unable to attend Hospice Day Service to ensure their concerns, combined with the loneliness of lockdown and social distancing do not become overwhelming.

These changes mean that we are seeing many more patients than we would in normal circumstances. We are so proud of our brave doctors, nurses, and other key workers, many of whom are making personal sacrifices to provide this vital care. They are the unsung heroes of this pandemic and we are so proud of their work.

Recently, we've written to local care homes to offer our support in helping elderly residents get the care they need for a calm, dignified and peaceful death in familiar surroundings. Residents might be having fewer visits from healthcare professionals than normal. Our nurses and clinical nurse specialists are here to help these residents get the care they need.



Helping those facing terminal illness achieve a dignified death is what we do. We've cared for patients for 40 years and will continue to do so for the next 40 and beyond. We are ensuring everyone receives the end of life care they need throughout the pandemic, regardless of how long it may last.

For more information about our services [contact Tor Edwards, Head of Communications.](#)

## Kent Association of the Blind

Balloons and bunting were set to be the focus of Spring 2020 for [Kent Association of the Blind](#) as we prepare for the charity's 100th anniversary on 22nd June. Instead, like many Voluntary Sector organisations, we have spent recent months focused on our Covid-19 response. The flexible work arrangements supported by KCC through IT equipment enabled us to move quickly to work from home in March, while continuing to provide support to clients.

Our first priority was to call clients, to see how they were doing and what support they needed from us. We made 2542 wellbeing calls throughout April and May. Working in partnership with KCC's Sensory and Autism team we made 2542 wellbeing calls in April and May, with a focus on contacting Shielding clients.

For many clients, an early concern was how they access food and medication. Sight impaired people were not eligible for priority access to supermarket delivery slots and changes to store layouts were daunting for many. We quickly launched a new Shopping Service to deliver essential supplies to our most vulnerable and isolated clients, and put together a database of alternative local delivery options.

We have seen an increase in demand for our telephone befriending service as a result of the anxiety associated with being in lockdown. This demand was met by redeploying trained volunteers whose normal face to face roles were on hold for their own safety. Of all the befriending calls made, 37% have been to new clients of the service. For clients whose emotional support needs went beyond that of a regular chat, we were also able to increase the capacity of our Telephone Counselling Service.

Technology has played a key role in keeping sight impaired people connected during Covid-19. [Remote and telephone support](#) from our specialist Assistive Technology Workers has provided vital problem solving to keep users of mobile technology, speech and magnification software online. Technology has also been an important part of service delivery – from WhatsApp [video mobility sessions](#) with sight impaired children and their parents, to regular email bulletins to clients and [new videos](#) demonstrating the daily living strategies usually offered by our Rehabilitation Workers face to face.

For clients still actively receiving hospital treatment for their eye condition, the cancellation of non-urgent appointments has been a significant cause of concern. Our Eye Clinic Liaison Officers have been available to bridge the gap between Health and Social Care services and provide advice on changes to sight or other anxieties over the phone.

As lockdown restrictions have eased, but social distancing remains crucial, the question of how to do this safely, as a sight impaired person, has become one of the most crucial issues. We have produced [guidance about social distancing](#) to give tips to sight impaired people and advise transport providers, retail services and members of the public on how they can help.



## Caring All together on Romney Marsh – Happy Post



As soon as lockdown started, Caring All together on Romney Marsh (CARM) adapted its services to continue supporting isolated, older people in the rural communities that we serve. The 'Happy Post' project was started in April. Our clients who were already considered to be lonely and isolated were now facing weeks with very little contact. The idea was to ensure our clients, who would be isolating alone, receive a letter or postcard offering them a window into the world outside. As one of our team stated "There is something exciting about receiving post!"

Local school children were invited to be part of the project that has continued to grow. We asked them to help brighten someone's day by drawing a picture, writing a letter or sending a postcard, which would then be sent to someone who may be feeling lonely and may well be in 'isolation' alone. We have had a wonderful response from the local children (and adults), with over 100 pieces of Happy Post arriving through close to 100 letterboxes. Look at this lovely example from a little girl aged 8. She writes: 'Dear Friend, Hopefully you're getting along with lockdown. I have been having a good time with my mum and brother and we have been doing our outside activities. Love, your friend.'

These small acts of kindness have brought real delight and cheer to our clients, many have expressed this in their feedback: "Just wanted to say thank you for that dear little picture done by a child of 5 years old. Very kind. I hope that little girl or boy gets thanked too." Another client said: "I received a lovely card from Tilly, I was very happy to get her card. It has cheered me up no end."

A Telebefriender reported: "It was the first thing he wanted to tell me about, he had received a card from Oscar and was absolutely delighted with it". All in all, the project has been and continues to be a great success.

## Alzheimer's and Dementia Support Services – Staying Connected During Lockdown



The speed and breadth of the lockdown measures enforced due to the Covid-19 pandemic meant that it was of paramount importance that we acted quickly. Knowing that routine is a key aspect of wellbeing for those living with dementia, we understood that the impact of lockdown would be enormous - not only for the individual living with dementia, but for their carers, too.

We quickly set to work planning a strategy to ensure we did everything possible to help people affected by dementia during these very trying times. We called the people we support to check on them and help them cope with the dramatically changing circumstances. Hundreds of calls were made in the first few weeks and ongoing welfare checks and support were put in place whilst simultaneously getting our workforce working from home and staying connected as a team.

We knew that as much as people value our support, we had to find a way of keeping them connected to their peers. We set to work helping people to use IT to stay in touch via Zoom, Facebook and our website.. We have been so encouraged by the amount of people who have been able to use the technology to keep themselves connected. Many people living with dementia are getting a great sense of satisfaction at learning these skills. We now run at least two virtual support group sessions and one singing group per week and have had more than 300 attendances at our virtual groups. One client said:

“We really benefit from singing together, peer groups and cafe meetings. David does not find looking at a screen easy and may not last a whole session patiently (just as he doesn't do FaceTime with the grandchildren for more than a minute) but just being able to point out faces that might feel familiar and for me, to chat to old friends and receive advice and encouragement, this has been wonderful. ADSS literally ZOOMED into action and gave us a strong feeling of belonging to something safe.”

More recently we have also turned our attention to helping other local organisations rise to challenge of supporting people affected by dementia. We delivered a virtual Dementia Awareness training session that was attended by over 30 people and we have plans to get our 'dementia drop-in' restarted, albeit virtually. This will be in partnership with the Memory Clinic Team at KMPT and Imago. Our virtual carers learning group will launch in July to provide some much-needed support to family carers who are struggling at this time.

We're incredibly proud to say that all the changes we've made to our services continue to be well received, and as a consequence, our future practice will remain forever changed.

If you would like to know more about the support we offer [please do get in touch](#).



## Connect Well East Kent

Social Enterprise Kent has been doing some amazing work across all programmes, supporting people whilst they are in crisis, and empowering them with the knowledge of how to seek support in the future.

In May we saw the number of telephone calls handled by Connect Well East Kent drop from 12,563 to 3,001 which is in part due to people getting used to the “new normal” and solving immediate crises when COVID-19 first hit. Our team were given lists of people to contact for support by the GP surgeries, working closely with the Hubs, and we have now worked our way through those calls and have either solved their short-term problems or have signposted people into appropriate services. We have supported people by organising food parcels and having shopping and prescriptions delivered to them, as well as coordinating a new volunteer Telephone Befriending Service.



## Age UK and Age Concern

From the outset of the pandemic, Age UKs and Age Concerns adapted to rapidly changing circumstances. The charities work together in a consortium and whilst local need was prioritised, a collective effort across the county meant that lessons and best practice were shared to maximum benefit for older people in Kent. The focus from the outset was on how best to provide support to those who needed help. Since day one, the charities have been working on the front line and directly contributing to tackle the impact of the coronavirus.

Whilst services such as day care, foot-care and dedicated support for people living with dementia and their carers were suspended, other services such as meals delivery, shopping, prescription collection and information and advice (remotely delivered) increased exponentially. Phone calls continued to rise while people acclimatised themselves to staying indoors.

Some staff continued going into client's homes, supporting them with practical tasks such as laundry and meal preparation despite the challenges of sourcing reliable and safe PPE. These services have been vital to ensure people's existing needs did not escalate into needing social care or medical interventions.

It has become evident that Coronavirus is having a disproportionate impact on older people's health and mobility. Not only are older people at increased risk of severe implications if they contract Coronavirus, but they are most likely to have been affected by surgery and treatment being postponed. At the same time, we know that sustained periods of social distancing or shielding is having a negative impact on many older people's mental health.

Age UKs and Age Concerns in Kent Consortium established ways to keep in touch with their existing and new clients, providing remote support to keep people engaged and occupied, fit and healthy, aware of other support services available to them and aware of the government guidelines throughout the crisis.

Staff have prepared activity packs - now being delivered weekly to clients (including crossword puzzles, games and quizzes), exercise sheets, cream teas, special meals and celebratory treats. All of this is augmented by telephone calls and visits. Support for family carers looking after a person with dementia continued, sometimes face to face when crisis may be imminent.

The charities are now working together to develop strategies to support people as the restrictions ease. We know that many people who have been isolated want to get back to some kind of normality and others are anxious and will need help. The task ahead throws up new challenges such as planning logistics of operating day services for reduced numbers due to social distancing. We believe that all of the charities will be operating dual services for some time e.g. some in day centres and the majority still at home and needing support some of which will be intensive.

Services may change but older people's health and wellbeing will remain at the centre of everything that we do.

## **Connecting People – A Guide for Care Homes**

During the COVID-19 outbreak it has never been more important for carers, social care professionals and clinicians to be able to communicate with each other and the people they care for as effectively and securely as possible. The Design and Learning Centre have developed a guide which outlines some of the key ways you can access and use technology to improve communication between your residents and health and social care professionals.

We know that Care Homes will be at different stages on their technology journey and some may need extra help implementing innovations. The [Design and Learning Centre](#) is able to support your needs and can signpost to information and training.

A number of webinars are planned for June and July on key topics such as video consultations and Microsoft Teams. If you are interested, please [contact us to sign up to the mailing list](#) and be updated on new sessions. Please see the attached email for more information.

## **Expect a call from Healthwatch Kent soon**

Healthwatch Kent will be contacting many of you next week to chat to you about Covid and how you are coping. Over the next week to 10 days they will be calling 50% of homes (including LD, MH & PD) to gather a Kent wide picture about how the sector is coping and what lessons we have learnt. We would encourage you to be

honest and open with them and be reassured that they will anonymise your feedback.

This is not a scrutiny exercise but is a great opportunity to share your thoughts with an independent organisation and we fully endorse the project. They will share the overall themes and trends with the KCC team to help us prioritise how to support you going forwards. If you have any questions, [get in touch with Healthwatch](#).

## **Sharing Your Excellence**

We are always pleased to hear your good news stories, and to hear that the resources being put in place are useful and making a difference to you and your staff. If you've received or delivered any little acts of kindness or have any good news stories, [please let us know](#).